

Pitrois,
The Heurtin family.

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STANISLAS, MARIE, AND MARTHE HEURTIN

Both girls are congenitally blind-deaf; their brother is congenitally deaf and nearly blind

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THE American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, a scientific and scholarly body, was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York in 1890 "for the purpose of promoting instruction in speech to all deaf children throughout America."

In December, 1908, the Association took over and is now continuing the work of **The Volta Bureau for the Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge Relating to the Deaf**.

The two institutions labor to keep alive in the deaf the most precious acquisition of the human race, the faculty of speech, to the end that no child in America shall grow up dumb because of deafness; to obtain equal opportunities, educational or otherwise, for the deaf; correctly to inform the public regarding this great class of our population, who number some 89,000 according to the last census; and to conduct research work into the general subject of deafness and the problems arising therefrom.

The **membership** of the Association includes representatives of every system of teaching speech to the deaf that is now extant, as well as aurists, psychologists, scholars, scientists, philanthropists, the deaf themselves, and all investigators into or thinkers upon the general subject of deafness and its phenomena.

The Association accomplishes its work, namely, the promotion of the teaching of speech to the deaf and the diffusion of cognate knowledge:

1. By **publications**, including monographs and *The Volta Review*, an illustrated monthly magazine of general and technical interest, all the receipts from which are devoted to the purposes of the magazine itself or to furthering the work of the Association.

2. By the maintenance of **the largest technical library** of its character in the world. The library is located at the Association's home, in the Volta Building, Washington, D. C., and is open to the free use of all members.

3. By **conventions**, at which all the leading specialists in problems relating to the deaf meet for an interchange of views and for the delivery of addresses, which are later published.

4. By the preparation of **exhibits** for the purpose of enlightening the public as to the character, the importance, and the progress of the work done by the Association.

5. By contributing toward the maintenance of **a normal class** of instruction at the Clarke School, Northampton, Mass., a sum which last year was in excess of the total revenue derived from membership dues in the Association.

6. By providing **a clearing house** of information through its executive offices in the Volta Building, at Volta Place and Thirty-fifth street, Washington, D. C. This correspondence department is under the supervision of Frank W. Booth, the general secretary of the Association.

7. By maintaining **a Teacher's Information Agency**, which is free to members. Last year the Information Agency received about 70 applications from teachers, and the number of inquiries for teachers was in excess of this supply.

8. By the preparation and circulation of **exhaustive statistics and information** relating to the deaf.

9. By such additional **research work** as the Association's resources will permit.

The **annual dues are \$2** and the fee for a life membership is \$50. There is **no entrance fee**.

All members of the Association are entitled to its magazine, *The Volta Review*, free of charge for the period of membership; to a reduced rate on its publications; to the free use of its library, and to all information collateral to the purposes of the Association which may be in the possession of its officers.

THE VOLTA REVIEW

Formerly THE ASSOCIATION REVIEW

A Monthly Specializing on Deafness and the Deaf

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THE HEURTIN FAMILY

OF NINE CHILDREN, THREE WERE BORN BLIND-DEAF, ONE DEAF AND "HÉMÉRALOPE," ONE BLIND, AND FOUR DIED YOUNG; TWO ONLY ENJOY ALL FACULTIES—SOME ACCOUNT OF THE SURVIVING DEFECTIVES, AND OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS WHICH EDUCATED THEM

EDITORIAL NOTE.—The percentage of physically defective offspring resulting from the marriage of this Breton tun-maker with his second cousin is so large as to be almost incredible were it not for the fact that all the statistics given by Mlle. Pitrois in the following article are vouched for by Monsieur A. Constantin, director of the Institution de la Persagotière at Nantes, France, who by special request has favored the Association with the following statistical summary:

THE HEURTIN FAMILY OF VERTOU, NEAR NANTES

Father, Stanislas Aristide, born December 6, 1856.

Mother, Josephine Marie, born October 12, 1852.

"They were married in 1884," writes M. Constantin; "they are second cousins ('cousins issus de germains'); but for us the cause of the infirmity of their children is, that the father has a disease of the spinal marrow ('une maladie de la moelle épinière'), and suffers moreover from hemeralopia.¹

1. Marie, born April 13, 1885; born blind-deaf.
2. Lucien, born February 8, 1887; died at the age of 21 days.
3. Eugénie, born December 11, 1887; born blind; died August 5, 1899.
4. Elisa, born December 24, 1891; in possession of all senses.
5. Adelaide, born July 29, 1894; in possession of all senses.
6. Stanislas, born December 21, 1896; born deaf and "héméralope."
7. Germaine, born January 3, 1899; died March 12, 1902.
8. Marthe, born July 23, 1902; born blind-deaf.
9. Germaine André, born November 22, 1906; born blind-deaf and paralyzed in the limbs; died January 20, 1908.

"As you see," adds M. Constantin, "this information confirms the article."

Mlle. Pitrois, the writer of this article, was born and has always lived in France. She lost her hearing, and temporarily her sight as well,

¹ An abnormal condition of the eyes in which the sense of vision requires daylight and is impaired by artificial light. The term is sometimes used in an exactly opposite sense; that is, to mean day blindness.

from sunstroke at the age of seven, after having learned to read and write. All her subsequent education, including her knowledge of the English language, has been imparted by her mother, her only teacher. Although only thirty years old, Mlle. Pitrois has written several books and more than 200 magazine articles.

TO possess the most charming physical appearance, the fresh, pure beauty of youth, or the innocent grace of childhood; to prove a sweet, attractive character, a loving heart that gains at once everybody's affection; to have longings for everything grand and beautiful, which would suffice to prove the existence of the human soul, supreme masterpiece of God—and yet to have to walk in a world made of darkness and silence; to be both deaf and blind *by birth*, or deaf and nearly blind!

Such is the pathetic destiny of two French girls and their brother—Marie, Marthe, and Stanislas Heurtin, now respectively 25, 8, and 13 years old. These three young people, so charming and so afflicted, deserve to be known and loved in the country that gave birth to Helen Keller.

I.

MARIE AND HER TEACHER

It was in the spring of last year that unexpected and distressing news shocked the world of silence—to which I belong—and afflicted also all those who take interest in our welfare: Sister Ste. Marguerite had died!

Fifty years ago a little girl named Marie Germain was born not far from Auray, the sanctuary of Ste. Anne—the mother of the Virgin—who is, according to the tradition, the patron saint of Brittany. Some years ago I visited that country, and never shall I forget the touching devotion and piety of its inhabitants. It is the place in all France where the faith of our fathers has its deepest roots. The Bretons believe in it with a strength one could compare to the solidity of the great raised stones—those *menhirs*, hundreds of thousands of years old, that are seen everywhere on the melancholy moors by the sea.

Marie Germain belonged to one of those pious families; a race whose members are mariners, true heroes of the sea, accustomed to fight unceasingly—helped by prayer—against the blind, brutish forces of Nature. Three men in the Germain family were drowned at sea. Through these relatives the girl received an endless faith, an extraordinary energy, a perseverance as well as a will which she utilized later on in her life-work.

The Nuns' School at Larnay

Very early she showed the disposition of the religieuse. When she was a maid of but 18, she was accepted as a novice in the community of the Sisters of Wisdom, and from that day Marie Germain vanished from the world; there remained only Sister Ste. Marguerite.

The order of Sisters of Wisdom, the Grey Sisters, devotes itself to the teaching and the education of the poor, and specially of deaf girls. These sisters are at the head of seven large schools for the deaf in France, besides superintending several hospitals, workshops and asylums, where orphan, friendless, and firm or unfit deaf women find a home and the most affectionate protection.

Sister Ste. Marguerite was soon sent to a school for the deaf, Notre Dame de Larnay, near Poitiers, where she was to spend her too-short life. Notre Dame de Larnay was founded, about 60 years ago, by the Abbé de Larnay, who gave his own country-seat to shelter several deaf girls in whom he was specially interested. The little country house increased year after year; new buildings were erected in the green, flowery gardens shadowed by beautiful trees, and now Larnay is one of the largest and finest institutions for the deaf of France. It sheltered under the care of the sisters, over 200 deaf girls. About half of them are

pupils from 7 to 17 years of age, who are there to be educated. They are demutized, taught by speech and lip-reading, receive a good school training, and learn a trade according to their aptitudes and abilities.

The other inhabitants of Larnay are older deaf women who, having neither family nor friends, or fearing to return to a world so often unkind and unsympathetic to the deaf, have asked to remain in their dear convent home. They earn their living by embroidering marvelous church stuffs, such as silk or velvet banners, altar clothes, stoles, chasubles, surplices, and so on—real masterpieces that have made Larnay famous.

There is also at Larnay a very touching little order, that of Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs (Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows), created to give to the most pious former pupils the consolations of the religious life. There are about twenty sisters, who remain among their companions in the "ouvroir" (work-room), doing with them every kind of embroidery and sewing. They also help the hearing mistresses to look after the younger deaf children.

Marthe Obrecht

As so generally with the French schools for the deaf, Larnay possesses several blind pupils—in this instance about forty—and, at the time young Sister Ste. Marguerite arrived, there was even a blind-deaf girl, who was taught by an old self-sacrificing nun, Sister Ste. Médulle.

That unfortunate child, Marthe Obrecht, had seen and heard perfectly well till the age of 3. But in the course of the Franco-German war the girl, frightened and horrified at the sight of the German troops assailing her town, had suddenly lost her senses. Blind and deaf as she was, she had been put on board a train like a cumbersome parcel and sent to the Sisters of Larnay, without even a letter of explanation!

It was nearly impossible when she arrived to find in her anything human. She was like a dull, stupid, inert mass

of flesh, in whom one could perceive neither feeling, emotion or intelligence. However, after a few years' patient training, her teacher, Sister Ste. Médulle, helped by a deaf sister who acted as a devoted under-teacher, took that young soul out of her deep darkness. She taught her Braille reading and writing, the manual alphabet and the sign-language, and easy handicrafts, such as brush-work, chair-bottoming, etc. Above all, she made her think, pray and love, giving her another life than that coarse, material existence which had hitherto seemed to be her lot on earth.

Sister Ste. Médulle promptly marked out Sister Ste. Marguerite for her cleverness, her splendid optimism, her self-sacrifice. She took her as a pupil, taught her her methods, and when she died, in 1894, she left her the charge of her adopted daughter. From that moment Sister Ste. Marguerite adopted Marthe Obrecht, and, through her guidance, the handicapped girl made new and remarkable progress.

Marie Heurtin's Early Life

But the most beautiful part of her mission began on the first of March, 1895. On that day two poor, humble persons, a Breton tun-maker and his aunt, arrived at Larnay, pushing before them a little creature which seemed at best little more than a wild beast. It was Marie Heurtin. While in the like case Marthe Obrecht's horror and despair expressed themselves in a stupid inertness, Marie Heurtin was, on the contrary, struggling with all her might and savagely throwing herself about in her horrid cell of silence and night. She had been born deaf and blind; she had never seen a ray of light, a human face; she had never heard a voice, a sound.

The world was nothing to her but an undecipherable enigma, a frightful chasm. She was ten years old at this time, and had spent all her life at her parents' home, at Vertou, near Nantes, without any sort of teaching. Her passionate outbursts of despair and rage constantly preyed upon her, and yet, even in this

dreadful condition, she had given some marks of intelligence, or instinct. One day a good-hearted neighbor had put some jam on the child's bread, a luxury that her poor parents could not afford. Soon Marie recognized the house of the neighbor, and then used to scream before the gate, showing her slice of dry bread, over which she passed and repassed her finger.

Another day she slyly introduced herself into her father's cellar, guided, no doubt, by her smell, and there, walking towards a cask full of wine, turned on the tap and began to drink. But, once satisfied, she noticed that the wine went on flowing out and out. Confusedly she felt that she had done some wrong, and, fearing a punishment, she ran away and hid herself for some time.

A third evidence of her inborn mentality is more noteworthy still. One day the blind-deaf girl had been left alone in a room, and was sitting near the fire husking kidney beans. Suddenly a spark flew out from the chimney and fell on the sleeve of her apron. She smelled the smoke and the burning cloth; she vaguely understood that she was going to be burned, and thought that the only way to save herself was promptly to take off her apron, to undress, and to go to bed. So she did, as quickly as she could. When her father came in soon after and found her in bed, she showed him her burned sleeve for explanation.

The poor child had been several times refused admission to different institutions. The schools for the blind would not accept her because she was deaf, and the schools for the deaf rejected her because she was blind. Besides, many persons, seeing her terrible temper and hearing her cries of despair, her constant howls, declared her mad. Even her eyes—her splendid large eyes, of light brown color, so full of life—increased this belief, for they gave reason to think that she saw perfectly well. The parents at last decided to have her shut up in an asylum for the insane, with the strait-jacket and the cell as her only perspective in life.

Just as they were planning this as the only course for their daughter, they heard of Larnay and of the blind-deaf girl who had been educated there. They tried this last chance and brought there the unfortunate little creature. Here, at last, the doors were flung open and wide open, too, were the arms of the motherly heart of Sister Ste. Marguerite.

First Stages of Education

Very hard indeed were the beginnings of her mission. Only teachers of the blind-deaf will be able to understand and measure the self-devotion Sister Ste. Marguerite showed in the education of Marie Heurtin. Confusedly Marie herself in quite different surroundings amidst quite different people. In her hands, groping in the horrible darkness, found no more the furniture, the things she was accustomed to touch. Then she used to burst into terrible fits of anger, screaming and kicking in every direction. She particularly hated the good sisters, and when any one came near her she would at once touch her, and, if she could recognize the large sleeves or the starched caps of one of the nuns, she began to howl in the most dreadful manner.

The sisters tried to take her out for walks, but on the way Marie, getting angry again, would roll about on the ground like a creature possessed, so that it was necessary to take her back, carrying her by the shoulders and the feet.

At length, after two months, it was possible to note another stage in the child's development. Marie had a little penknife which she prized highly. The teacher took it from her, and she, after giving it back to her, at the same time placing the child's hands one above the other, thus showing her the sign of that object. Again she took the penknife from her. Immediately, and as was always the case on similar occasions, the girl went into a paroxysm of rage, crying, screaming, and groping for the penknife. Then all at once she thought of making the sign taught her a month



THE CLASS-ROOM OF THE BLIND-DEAF AT LARNAY

Marthe Obrecht is knitting; Marie Heurtin is deciphering a braille map of France; and Anne-Marie Poyet is reading aloud the raised characters before her, spelling them at the same time into the hand of the girls' teacher, Sister Ste. Marguerite. Anne is demutized, and speaks very well.

before, and immediately Sister Ste. Marguerite, who was anxiously watching all her movements, gave her back the penknife.

The first and hardest step had been taken. The poor child knew from that moment that things have a name, a thought, directed by the will, which may be given objective expression by a sign.

By and by the little girl came to designate by means of signs the eggs she wanted for her supper, and the most usual things, such as plates, saucepans, cups and saucers, spoons and various other things which composed her little *ménage*, and which she used to touch and touch for hours on end. Then her teacher taught her how to recognize the different objects that were around her, and how to name them, not only by a sign, but also by a touch-alphabet, as well by the Braille writing, a system which she came to learn with surprising quickness.

Thus it came about that she could speak, read and write in her own way! Her intelligence was awakened. She came to know herself and others, and the more her mind developed the more infrequent became her fits of anger. So, in less than a year the madness and despair had disappeared, and the "wild girl" who had so terribly frightened the Larnay pupils was transformed into a graceful, refined and charming creature whose sweet, peaceful face and marvelous smile proclaimed the wonderful changes her intelligence and heart had undergone.

Moral Training

Sister Ste. Marguerite, with her power of divination, her most delicate tact, poured out the treasures of her own soul into the soul of her pupil by the channel of her ten fingers. As simply as she taught Marie grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, house-keeping, sewing, knitting, and so on, she directed her towards noble and beautiful aspirations, developing in her the love of and desire for all that is good, the hatred and fear of all that is evil.

A very characteristic incident, which

took place when Marie was about two shows the moral training she received from her teacher. It was the day "clean collars." At the moment of entering the chapel, Marie, who is instinctively a coquette (where does not nine vanity lurk!) touched her own collar, then her neighbor's. She found that her own was not so nicely ironed as Celine's, and at that she deliberately crumpled Celine's collar. After the service, Sister Ste. Marguerite called for the culprit, and, instead of taking her gently and patting her, as she used to do, she pushed her back, and, as a punishment she took her collar away from her for the whole day. From that hour Marie was never more inclined to be jealous.

Starting from such elementary notions of qualities and faults, Sister Ste. Marguerite helped her pupil to ascend the degrees of moral and religious life, and she thus took her even to the highest summits. One day she made her touch an old ragged beggar-woman, and accustomed her to the thought—which revolted her at first—of poverty and old age. Another time she took her near a sister who had just died, and before the cold and senseless body she revealed her the solemn mystery of death. But she did not stop there, and, to redouble the awful impression the girl had gathered, she opened before her the prospect of eternal life. In order to give her an idea of God, the sister began with the image of the sun, which Marie has always loved so ardently that she used to hold out her arms towards it and climb up the trees trying to catch it.

"Who made the sun, Marie?" the good teacher asked one day. "Do you know?" "Yes," triumphantly answered the child, "I know: it is the baker!" A short time before she had learned how bread was made, and so confused the flaming red oven and the splendid star.

Very gently and patiently, in simple clear language Sister Ste. Marguerite told her of her mistake, and spoke to her about Him who made the sun; about our Father who is in Heaven.

This revelation was for the girl the

most radiant hour of her whole life; from that very minute this "unknown" became to her darkened soul just as if her dear sun had been to her body. She cannot see Him, she cannot hear Him, she cannot even touch Him, but she can feel Him; she is quite surrounded by His protection and tender love, and she herself loves Him with all the strength of her heart, so that one can say that this love for God is the chief character of this sympathetic, attractive creature. That piety proves itself in the simplest and most eloquent way: by the simplicity, the patience, even the joy with which Marie daily bears her heavy cross, and by the kindness, the sweet charity which she shows to each and all around her.

I shall cite but one out of the numerous and touching instances of her otherworldliness. Some years ago it was promised to the girl that she should be taken to Lourdes, a sanctuary where the French Roman Catholics go to ask the intercession of the Virgin for the cure of their illnesses or infirmities, or the accomplishment of their desires. Some suggested that perhaps there Marie should obtain the grace of recovering her sight. The face of the young unfortunate brightened with hope at this thought; but soon, mastering her emotion and covering up with her hands her beautiful brown eyes, so bright and expressive, she exclaimed, "No, no; I prefer not to see in this world, so as to see better in the other!"

And when she returned from Lourdes she wrote:

"Through obedience, and for her glory, I thank the Holy Virgin to recover me my sight. I did not think it good to grant me this; I remain blind. However, I am not on the contrary, I am always pleased to do as I will, with the hope that I shall see better in heaven the eternal glories. . . . I have been deeply moved by compassion at the sight of all the poor patients who were not cured. In the most holy sacrament passed before me, I prayed for their recovery, not for

by all the sisters, hearing or deaf, and all the girls less afflicted than herself. Soon her circle of friends overleaped the walls of her convent home. The fact that she is one of the eight or ten persons in the whole world who are deaf and blind, not from youth or infancy, but from birth; her rapid progress, her ability and cleverness, her charming manners, even her delicate and touching beauty—everything in her evokes emotion and wins the heart.

"Une Ame en Prison"

Considerable interest has been shown in her teaching from its very beginning. A professor of the Poitiers University, M. Louis Arnould, has published, under the title of "*Une Ame en Prison*" (an imprisoned soul), a moving story of her life and training. This sketch, formerly a sixteen-page booklet, increased in size with the progress of the girl, till it now forms a large book, beautifully illustrated, of over 450 pages.¹ Essays by herself, specially noticeable for the beautiful feelings they express, have also been printed in reviews, so that one may say that at the present hour Marie Heurtin is the most renowned blind-deaf person on the Continent. Very often prominent visitors have come to see her, even from foreign countries, and all of them were always charmed with her quick understanding and her ready replies. She hardly ever fails to recognize at once the persons coming to her; by her light touch she "sees" them nearly as well as if she had sight. One day, two unknown foreign ladies having called on her, she

¹ Through the courtesy of the author and publisher, Mlle. Pitrois obtained the first three photographs illustrating this article. The latest edition of this book also deals with the blind-deaf of the Old and the New Worlds, and contains sketches of over 100 of them, among them many noticeable Americans already mentioned in Mr. William Wade's "*The Blind-Deaf*." It also gives a full description of the only six schools for the blind-deaf existing in the world: one in France (Larnay), two in America (Boston, New York), one in Scotland (Edinburgh), one in Germany (Nowawes), one in Sweden (Venersborg).

to wonder, then, that Marie is a favorite with every one at Larnay, loved



MARIE HEURTIN CONVERSING WITH HER TEACHER

Marie was fifteen at the time this photograph was taken. (1900)

examined them with her hands and declared that they must be about 35 and 25 years of age, and, more surprising still, that they were sisters. Marie's observations were correct in both instances.

Numerous and well-deserved were the praises and honors the good Sister Ste. Marguerite received for her life-work, but none were so dear and so precious to her as the filial affection and gratitude Marie showed her.

Anne-Marie Poyet

After her beloved teacher it was, of course, her older companion in misfortune, Marthe Obrecht, that Marie preferred, till the moment, two years ago, when a new blind-deaf pupil entered Larnay. It was a charming and very bright little girl, about 12 years old, Anne-Marie Poyet, deprived of both hearing and sight from an attack of meningitis at the age of 17 months.

Heartily Sister Ste. Marguerite began at once this new labor of devotion and love: the deliverance of this young soul. But she needed an under-teacher. She had not far to go to find her. The intelligence, the cleverness, and, above all, the kindness and sweet patience of Marie were such that immediately the good teacher chose her to help her in the education of this little afflicted one.

With all the joy and enthusiasm of youth Marie applied herself to this task. It was she who taught Anne-Marie to decipher the Braille alphabet, spelling on her hand at the same time every word they were reading.

Aside from her tasks with Anne-Marie, the young deaf and blind teacher leads a very busy life. As skillful as she is clever, she sews a little and excels in all sorts of crochet-work, knitting, brush-making and chair-bottoming. But, while she likes very much this manual labor, she still prefers her studies.

In addition to her three beloved pupils, to whom she had entirely devoted herself for fifteen years, Sister Ste. Marguerite took a loving interest in five poor old women, deaf from birth or early childhood, who had become also blind later in

life, and have found in Larnay the best of refuges. Thus there are actually in the convent eight persons deprived of both sight and hearing. By means of letters she directed the teaching of several blind-deaf children, brought up in their own families or in foreign schools. She gave lessons to the deaf pupils, and trained Sisters of Wisdom and Sisters of Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs as teachers, either for the deaf or for the blind-deaf.

Possibly Sister Ste. Marguerite had overtaxed her strength and health by her trying life. In March, 1910, some days after Easter, I received a letter—a very pathetic and appealing letter—from Marie Heurtin. She wrote to me: "My teacher, Sister Ste. Marguerite, has been kept in bed for several days with bronchitis. I am so sad! Dear friend, *do* pray earnestly with me that God may cure quickly my so dearly loved mistress. You have long known all the kindness and devotion she has for us, poor infirm ones."

Hélas! Our prayers were not to be granted. Soon the bronchitis turned into pneumonia, and, a few days after, on the eighth of April, Sister Ste. Marguerite slept the last sleep.

II.

STANISLAS HEURTIN

Among the essays written by Marie Heurtin, published by the French press and reprinted in the book "Imprisoned Souls," there is one which cannot be read, now that the truth is known, without a deep and painful emotion. It is the account of a visit paid by the blind-deaf girl, then seventeen years old, to her family, during the summer holidays of 1902. From it the following is a quotation:

"My mother led me near the cradle where my little sister was asleep; she was born fifteen days ago. I took her into my arms and I kissed her. She cried not at all. Sister Ste. Marguerite led me everywhere. She was my guide and my interpreter; she is so very nice

and devoted to me. I have begged Sister Ste. Marguerite to ask mother the name of my little sister. She told me that she is called Marthe.

"I spent three days with my family. I enjoyed very much to walk and to play with my sisters and my brother Stanislas, who is a frolicsome boy, and to have my baby sister Marthe in my arms, and I rocked her.

"In Nantes we are going to visit the school for the deaf, which is conducted by the Brothers of St. Gabriel. I have thought that my deaf brother, who is now six years old, will enter there in two years. He will acquire a good education, for he is very intelligent."

A daughter, deaf and blind from birth; a deaf son, who has, besides, very defective sight; and still Marie's parents were not at the end of their sorrows. As the weeks and the months went by they were obliged to admit a further affliction. This little baby girl, Marthe, was also born absolutely deaf and blind!

In the whole world can a family be found as sorely afflicted as this humble Breton cooper's? Of nine children, four have died young—a boy, in infancy; a girl, blind, at twelve; a girl, at three; a girl, deaf, blind, and paralytic, at fourteen months. There remain a healthy daughter, an ailing daughter, a deaf and nearly blind boy, and two blind-deaf girls, of whom one seems quite frail. This enormous proportion of atypical and defective issue is possibly to be accounted for, not so much by the fact that the marriage was one of second cousins, as by an affection of the spinal marrow to which the father is subject.

The Brothers of St. Gabriel

As Marie had found in Larnay the devotion of her beloved Soeur Marguerite, so Stanislas found a home and friends in the Persagotière, among the Brothers of St. Gabriel.

The Brothers of St. Gabriel have accomplished for our deaf boys the same mission as that effected by the Sisters of Wisdom among our deaf girls. The two orders have the same origin; both were founded by a Breton priest whose name is still revered in western France, the blessed Grignon de Montfort, who was born in Montfort, Brittany, in 1673,

and died, after indescribable suffering, scarcely 44 years old, in 1716.

While his spiritual daughters, the Sisters of Wisdom, are at the head of several of our large schools for deaf girls, some years ago his spiritual sons, the Brothers of St. Gabriel, were the conductors of eight large schools for deaf boys. Altogether the two orders conducted fifteen schools and taught over 950 pupils of both sexes.

However, since the passage of the law against congregations, many monks and nuns have gone into exile with their pupils. Those of the Brothers of St. Gabriel who have remained, though they have secularized themselves and taken the civil costume, have kept their rules and their methods of teaching; they have, above all, retained their splendid Christian devotion and their never-failing kindness towards deaf boys, to whom they give their whole life.

The Nantes School for Deaf Boys

All their schools have the same course of studies. The oral method only is used by them. Every year some pupils present themselves for the official examinations with hearing boys, and the success they are obtaining is a proof both of their cleverness and of their excellence in speech and lip-reading. In every school there are work-shops, where the older pupils go some hours daily in order to receive vocational training, the trades most generally taught being those of shoemaker, tailor, gardener, joiner, turner, and printer. As a rule the teachers keep track of the graduated pupils, sometimes—as at the Poictière school for boys—even founding for them benefit clubs and societies for mutual help.

The Nantes school for boys, la Persagotière, which gathers the deaf boys of Brittany and lower Loire, is nearly as beautiful as the Poitiers school for girls, Notre Dame de Larnay. It was founded at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the Chartreuse of Auray, by a great benefactor of the deaf of France, Father Deshayes, General-Superior of the communities of Sisters of Wisdom.



MARTHE HEURTIN AND HER HEARING SISTERS

The central figure is Marthe

and Brothers of St. Gabriel. In 1856 it was transferred by Brother Louis to the ancient castle of the Persagotière. About twenty years ago a school for the blind was established in connection with it. The headmaster is M. Constantin.

Both teachers and pupils are settled in magnificent new buildings, preceded by a long, majestic avenue bordered by beautiful trees. Around the castle lovely green gardens are full, from the beginning of spring to the end of autumn, of blossoming roses, of which the exquisite fragrance perfumes the air. Beyond the gardens, woods, groves, vineyards, and orchards extend themselves on a wide space of several hectares. A splendid terrace, shadowed by big trees, rises above a lovely river, the Sèvre.

Hither came Stanislas Heurtin at eight years of age. He was then undisciplined enough. His sister Marie had, indeed, written of him: "My parents cannot keep him at home, for he likes to escape, and they fear that an accident may happen to him." This was the more to be feared for the reason that the poor child is *héméralope*; his field of vision is extraordinarily narrow; and as soon as the twilight comes he can no more walk by himself.

One evening in winter, soon after his entrance into the Persagotière, he happened to notice the moon, which was shining with especial brilliance. He gazed at it for a long time with wide-open eyes, then suddenly went off into a shout of laughter, crying: "Look! Do you see this moon? Well, you will never believe it, but there is one just like it in my country!"

Very soon Stanislas gained every heart in the school by his docility, his sweet and amiable disposition, and his good character. He is a keen and thoughtful observer; he likes to touch everything, he longs to understand everything. In spite of his infirmities, he succeeds in maintaining himself on a level with the less afflicted companions of his own age. As to manual work, he is taught a little gardening, and especially chair-bottoming, the trade which is best adapted to his weak sight.

Last summer we had the pleasure, my dear mother-teacher and myself, to pay a visit to the Persagotière. There we had Stanislas Heurtin presented to us by his teacher, M. Coissard. Stanislas is a fair boy, thirteen years old now, tall and slim, with blue eyes, rosy complexion, regular features, and a face always amiable and smiling. In spite of his poor sight, which increases for him the difficulty of lip-reading, he succeeds in understanding nearly everything. His speech is said to be good. His utterance is slow but natural and sweet.

In a word, Stanislas Heurtin has no personality as interesting as those of his two blind-deaf sisters, but he has a charming and attractive nature, which, thanks to his devoted masters, will still further develop itself. He easily gives back affection for affection, and has a fond love for his afflicted sisters, Marie and especially for little Marthe, with whom he is better acquainted and with whom he spends all his holidays even now.

He was very much affected when told of the death of Sister Ste. Marguerite, to whom it was hoped to intrust the education of Marthe Heurtin, as had been the wish of Marie Heurtin. Some months after this event, when the summer holidays were at hand, he came to his teacher with a great resolution in his blue eyes and gravely said:

"Good-bye, sir. I thank you for your kindness to me, but I must tell you that I will not come back to school next year."

"Not come back to school?" repeated M. Coissard. "And why not?"

"Oh," answered Stanislas, "Sister Ste. Marguerite is dead. I intend to go to Larnay to teach my little sister Marthe who is entering there next term."

"But, my boy, one must know the manual alphabet to teach the blind-deaf and you do not know it."

"Oh, yes. I have learned it in secret. And Stanislas began to spell on his fingers.

"You see, sir," he concluded, triumphantly, "I can teach our Marthe very well."

L. Coissard was in two minds, to laugh and cry. He quieted the boy by telling him that the Larnay nuns were bound to be as kind and devoted to his mother as he would be himself.

III.

MARTHE HEURTIN

Stanislas's teacher could have added to the mission of educating Marthe, which Sister Ste. Marguerite had bequeathed, was made easier by the loving interest of himself and others. In fact, like Marie, till the age of ten, had been without culture, without teaching of any sort, turned away by two schools, seemed nothing but a howling fury, but she has been far more privileged. Her family is as needy and as ignorant as before, but the younger daughter has benefited by Marie's experience. Of Marthe, the Heurtins and their relatives no longer believed, as they had of Marie, that the blind-deaf girl was a monster, a wretched being incapable of receiving instruction. Marie's example, had it not proved victoriously the contrary?

So, ever since her birth, in July, 1902, Marthe has been cherished by every one. Her mother, being obliged to work out-as a journeywoman, always confided her to her two hearing sisters, or to neighbors. All the kindness shown to her has rapidly developed her intelligence and natural gifts, so much that, in her ninth year, she is a charming child of considerable development and education.

Even before she began her studies she was an instructor and a friend in her father's master, M. Coissard, who is an excellent speech-teacher, as well as the author of works dealing with the education of the deaf, with demutization, with correction of defective speech, and with improvement of the voice.

M. Coissard has very often traversed eight kilometers which separate the Sagotière from Vertou, the picturesque village, in the neighborhood of

Nantes, which is the birthplace of the Heurtins.

I have asked M. Coissard for some data regarding his protégée, and he has been good enough to supply me with all the photographs illustrating this article, except the first three. To this favor he has added that of writing out the following observations:

Marthe dresses herself alone and combs her own hair, never forgetting to tie a ribbon in it, for, like Marie, she is a coquette. She likes fine dress and perfumes. She is gifted with a very sweet disposition. When vexed she cries and struggles but little. She recognizes people by the odor of their clothes, or by feeling of their faces. When I arrive she begins by feeling my clothes; then, touching my face, she discovers my beard. When she has recognized me she laughs gaily, quite contented, and asks me by signs if I have brought her something to eat.

One day I brought her some cakes; she ate them, and then, not having had enough, she took me by the hand and led me to the village grocer. I told the grocer-woman not to move. Marthe went straight to the shop counter, tapped on it with her hands to call the merchant; then went to the shelf, took down a paper bag, opened it, and asked by signs to have it filled up. When her desire had been satisfied, she took me again by the hand and brought me back to her home. Arrived there she offered some cakes to those present and herself ate the rest, asking by signs from time to time for something to drink.

Her mother told me once that Marthe would be very happy if only she had a doll. I brought her one in a box. When I put the box in her hands she began by smelling it; then opened it hastily, felt of the contents, and, recognizing a doll, she uttered a cry of joy. She threw back the box and began to rock tenderly the doll in her arms. I gave her some cakes; she ate some of them, and, running over the face of her doll with her fingers, discovered its mouth, to which she presented a cake, and then, as if the doll had really eaten it, she carefully wiped its mouth. Some moments after she carried the doll to her aunt, put it on her lap, folded her aunt's apron over it, and lovingly rocked it, as if to put it to sleep.

Another day I found her playing in a field far enough from her home. She took my hand and led me by herself straight to her father's house, the road to which was pretty rough and difficult.

On one occasion she happened to discover my bicycle. Deeply interested, she began to handle it and stayed five or ten minutes to feel carefully of every part, fingering and fingering again each detail, as if she tried to understand its use. I put her in the saddle and took her

for a walk; she seemed delighted with this unknown means of locomotion.

I brought her two puzzle games; she felt them, and immediately she was able to recognize the square, the round, the lozenge, etc.

Once I led her to a piano. Very much perplexed by its vibrations, she tried with her hands to discover the cause of them, and then began to strum on it with delight.

Some time ago I took her two hands and, placing one of them on my own nose and the fingers of the other in my own mouth, I uttered the word "mamma." Immediately Marthe placed her hands exactly in the same positions on her own person and said, in a very clear voice, "mamma, mamma, mamma." Big tears rolled down the cheeks of the poor mother, who thus heard for the first time her unfortunate child call her. In the same way I taught her to say "papa."

To M. Coissard's valuable contribution I wish to add one extract from a letter of a deaf friend of mine, a simple working girl living in a home for orphan or forsaken deaf girls, directed in Nantes by the Sisters of Wisdom. She wrote me last summer:

"Some days ago the good Mother Superior, the dear sisters and we made a very pleasant trip. We took the steamboat to Vertou, where we walked to the house of Madame Heurtin. We saw the pretty little blind-deaf Marthe. How surprised we all were at her refinements of manner. She felt every one of us; she recognized the sisters by their costume, and immediately drew up chairs for them to be seated. Several girls among us were outside in the garden, or on the road. She came straight to us and gently took our hands to bring us into the house. We also saw her brother Stanislas, who is on his holidays. He is a very nice boy. I have talked with him; we understood each other pretty well. . . ."

For Marthe, these summer holidays were soon to be followed by an immense change—the most important of her short life. At the end of September her elder sister, Marie, came to Vertou with a nun of Larnay and spent some days with her family. On her departure, Marie took Marthe with her to Larnay.

At first Marthe was delighted to feel herself in the train, but suddenly she perceived that her mother was no more with her. Then what a change! There were clamors, howlings, reminding one of Marie, in the days when she was "the wild girl," fifteen years before. The

child tried to throw herself through the coach door. Some soldiers who were the same compartment were obliged to help master her. It was a terrible journey from Nantes to Poitiers. The unhappy child struck every one who tried to draw near her, even her sister Marie, and, in the agony of her fright and despair, furiously spat in the face of the nun who attended them.

IV.

A VISIT TO MARIE AND MARTHE

In the middle of October my mother and I went to Poitiers, a very gloomy town, indeed, but where the cordial welcome of dear friends takes the place of gaiety.

We spent an afternoon in visiting the school for the deaf and the blind boys. The headmaster, M. Lemesle, who has a "silver wedding with the school" (a jubilee of twenty-five years as headmaster) has been recently celebrated, is also a very devoted friend of the deaf. More than many others he concerns himself with the moral and spiritual welfare of his former pupils. Thus he has founded for them a club, the "Cercle de l'Abbé l'Épée," settled in a bright and gay building of wood, where they find games, books, illustrated papers, and a library. They have also, thanks to M. Lemesle's efforts on their behalf, a country house where they go to walk, where they can rest and enjoy themselves.

The results which M. Lemesle and sympathetic teachers obtain from special methods of instruction are satisfactory. We have had much pleasure from contact with the pupils, who, from the youngest to the eldest, are happy-faced, bright-eyed, high-spirited boys. One of the eldest, in addition to his real French attainments, is a good English scholar, and was not a little proud to prove to us his acquaintance with the English language.

The following day we took a carriage to Notre Dame de Larnay, which is about four miles distant from the town.



A "CONVERSATION CLASS" AMONG THE BLIND-DEAF
the Obrecht is conversing with Sister Ste. Marguerite; Anne-Marie Poyet is conversing
with Marie Heurtin. (From a photograph taken in 1909)

One must climb up and up to go to it, for it is upon a summit that it is erected, this house of God. In proportion as we are rising, on our left the town, with its black, big rocks; its dark houses, crowded the one against the other; its numerous train lines, seems to sink down, become smaller and smaller. At last it disappears, as if swallowed up in the soil, and, of all the realities, all the labors, all the hard sorrows and cruelties of life that a city represents, there remains but one detail—the slight, thin line of black smoke, left by a train departed for the unknown, that floats, floats in the blue sky and soon is vanished away.

We are in the open country. The splendid white buildings and the pointed steeple of the convent appear among the fields. We drive along the beautiful wide avenue, shadowed by elm trees; we leave behind the delightful park, with its coppice woods, where the pupils go to play thrice a week. The high iron gates open before us; a smiling, gray sister introduces us, through the majestic court of honor adorned with a beautiful statue of white marble, into the large drawing-room peopled with portraits of benefactors or friends of the deaf, among them the good Abbé de Larnay, the founder of the house, and the blessed Grignon of Montfort, the creator of the order, with his unforgettable face of triumphant martyrdom.

Accompanied by the Superior, we go to visit the class-rooms of the deaf girls, which are beautiful and bright. The pupils are charming, with their light blue aprons and their neckties of white muslin, a gift of the "Good Mother," so well called.

Of course I have talked much with these little sisters of mine. It is a well-known fact that none are so talkative (and are so happy to be so!) as deaf and dumb people together. Deaf and dumb? Oh, pardon! A slip of my pen.

I asked one of the Larnay girls: "And you—are you also deaf and dumb?"

"Deaf and dumb!" she answered, in a tone of offended dignity. "*Moi! Pas non!*"

"*Chut!*" said her teacher, gently. "*Mais oui*, you are deaf and dumb by birth."

"No, no," protested the girl, obstinately; "I am not deaf and dumb at all. I am one of the speaking deaf!"

And it is true that they are speaking deaf, the Larnay girls. Many of the eldest speak and understand so well that one could hardly believe that they cannot hear.

The School-room for the Blind-Deaf

Picture a small, very pretty room about which are hung black-boards, maps in Braille characters, toys, and a big clock with its dial in relief. This is the school-room for the blind-deaf. An old wrinkled nun, wearing the black-and-white costume of the order of Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs, is inclined towards a charming girl of about fifteen who deciphers with her skillful fingers a big Braille book, reading aloud. On the other side of the desk a girl of twenty-five, dressed in complete mourning for her spiritual mother, Sister Ste. Marguerite, is seated, writing with a stylus on white sheets of paper. Crouched close against the black dress, a fair-haired girl of eight is settled on a low stool, playing with chess-men.

These are Marie Heurtin, Anne-Marie Poyet, the pupils of Sister Ste. Marguerite, and little Marthe Heurtin, the new comer to Larnay.¹

Marie's portraits, even the best of them, do not do her justice. Her beauty does not lie in her regular features, the grace and exquisite delicacy of her manners, her frail, slim silhouette, nor the light-in-darkness of her brown eyes. One can apply to her, with a little alteration, the beautiful words describing Fanny Crosby, the poetess: "She is a blind girl, whose heart can see splendid in the sunshine of God's love." One feels so well that Marie is living in the very presence of God—in a world of light and harmony of which we scarcely dare to make us an idea! There is

¹ Unfortunately Marthe Obrecht was not there on the day of our visit.

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